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THE ETON COLLEGE HARE-HUNT

Three Prize Essays

BY

PHILIP DICKERSON
BEATRICE E. KIDD
E. CRICKMAY

LONDON
THE HUMANITARIAN LEAGUE
53, CHANCERY LANE, W.C.

1904

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P R E F A C E

THE following essays are those to which prizes were awarded in a recent competition organized by the Humanitarian League. Eton is the only great public school at which the boys are allowed to keep a pack of beagles and hunt hares, though the same is done by the cadets of the training-ship *Britannia* at Dartmouth and by the undergraduates of some colleges.

Here is a description of the sport :

“On February 4, 1899, being in the vicinity of Eton, I had an opportunity of seeing one of these hare-hunts, and I will give a short and exact description of what took place.

“At three o'clock, some 180 boys, many of them quite young, sallied forth for an afternoon's sport with eight couples of the college beagles. A hare was found at 3.15 near the main road leading to Slough. It was chased through the churchyard and workhouse grounds of this town into a domain dotted with villas called Upton Park. Escaping from this spot,

it ran towards Eton, but soon doubled back to Upton Park, the numerous onlookers in the Slough road lustily shouting at the dazed creature all the time. These circular chases were thrice repeated, the hare always getting back to Upton Park.

“Twice did the animal come within a few paces of where I was standing, and its condition of terror and exhaustion was painful to behold. The boys running after the hounds were thoroughly enjoying the thing, and two masters of the college, I was told, were amongst them. Now for the final scene, at which a friend of mine was present.

“The hare, which had been hunted two hours, having got into a corner at Upton Park which was bounded with wire-netting, was seized by the hounds and torn. The master of the pack then ran up, got hold of her, and broke her neck. The carcass was handed to one of the dog-keepers, who cut off the head and feet, which trophies were divided among the followers. The keeper with his knife then opened the body, and the master, taking it in his hands and holding it high above the hounds, rallied them with cries, and finally threw it into their midst, as they had, in the language of the *Eton College Chronicle*, thoroughly deserved blood.

“I make no comments upon these doings; I only say that I think the British public ought to know how boys are being trained at our

foremost school in respect to the cultivation of compassionate instincts towards the beings beneath us."

During the past few years the Humanitarian League has made repeated protests against the Eton hare-hunt, and the following memorial, bearing the signatures of a large number of well-known public men, representative of every shade of opinion, has been presented to the Governing Body:

"We beg to invite the attention of the Governing Body of Eton to the many protests made during the past few years against the institution known as the Eton College Beagles. Without entering on the general question of the morality of field sports as practised by adults, we would express our conviction that it cannot be otherwise than demoralizing for *the young* to be encouraged to seek amusement in the infliction of pain on animals, and that the permission granted to Eton boys to indulge in the sport of hare-hunting, when the drag-hunt is readily available as a substitute, is greatly to be deplored.

"We venture to suggest that, as there is now an increasing tendency among teachers to inculcate a more sympathetic regard for animals, it is highly desirable that Eton College should not stand aloof from this humane spirit. We therefore most respectfully appeal to the Govern-

ing Body to give this matter the full consideration that it deserves."

To this the Governing Body have replied that the matter is one which must be left to the Headmaster's "discretion," and the Headmaster has refused to interfere with the "liberty" of the boys.

There is the further question of the attitude of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals towards this sport, and the fact that both the Headmaster and the Provost of Eton are members of its Windsor branch. The following is an extract from a letter addressed by the Humanitarian League to the Prince of Wales, as President of the R.S.P.C.A.:

"It has been officially stated in the journal of the R.S.P.C.A. that 'the countenance given to Eton boys to indulge in the sport of hare-hunting is contrary to the principles of the parent society,' and as long ago as April, 1899, the secretary was directed to 'beg the local committee to give their serious attention to the subject.' The Windsor and Eton branch, however, has annually re-elected the Headmaster of Eton on its committee, with the result that the Society finds its principles set at naught by a prominent local member, with the support or connivance of the branch to

which he belongs. We submit that the spectacle of inconsistency thus presented by the R.S.P.C.A., condoning in Windsor what it condemns in London, cannot but be injurious to the cause which it represents."

It is obvious that the Eton College hunt could easily be turned from a hare-hunt into a drag-hunt, without losing any of its physical advantages for the boys. All that the Headmaster is asked to discontinue is the *cruelty* of the sport, not the sport itself. It does not seem unreasonable to ask this of a leading member of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals!

ESSAY I

By PHILIP DICKERSON

THE ETON COLLEGE HARE-HUNT

I

It is the merest truism that educationists should concern themselves quite as much with the recreations of boys as with their studies. It is the former mainly that, as a mimic anticipation of mature life, give play to the activities in which the dispositions that are to actuate their future conduct have their rise.

Eton is invested by general estimation with such unique prestige that the public mind is inexpressibly shocked to learn that it practises so barbarous a diversion—and this with the sanction of its rulers, emphatically persisted in after repeated influentially-signed expostulations. We would preserve the tone, not of denunciation, but of respectful remonstrance. We would not taunt them with the incongruity of vice-presidents of the R.S.P.C.A. vindicating such sports. We are sure that Dr. Warre and

Dr. Hornby are humane men, and heartily abhor whatever they regard as cruel. Those to whom it seems incredible that any who deem cruelty a ground of reprobation could approve the hare-hunt must remember that there is no atrocity so abominable as not at one time to have been universally acquiesced in.

The gladiatorial spectacles commanded the unanimous approbation of the community, and do not seem to have repelled even the ethical élite of pagan Rome. During the seven centuries of their prevalence, only two or three protesting voices were raised. Pliny was a very humane man, according to the standard of his age. If there was a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty, he doubtless belonged to it. Yet he says the desire for a spectacle in a certain colony was so strong, that to have denied it would have been cruelty. Even Cicero hedged, with deprecatory commendation, in quite the style of a twentieth-century Archbishop. The average man accepts the ethical notions current in his world without the possibility of their being open to question occurring to him.

Were it not for the quite limitless extent to which the conventional usages of the enviroing society and the prevalent class sentiment render the consciences of men insensible to the

most execrable atrocities, it would be amazing to the point of incredibility that men of culture and moral elevation should tolerate the hare-hunt. Surely it must be too patent to admit of denial that the stigma of cruelty attaches to any gratification in which the agony of a fellow-being is an essential ingredient. Other varieties of cruelty may, in some features, be more repulsive; but this diversion has features which aggravate the barbarity to a degree that can hardly be surpassed. If, on the score of their conducing to manliness and courage, any blood sports might be palliated, it would be the chase of the fierce carnivora, the bloodthirsty enemies of mankind. Here the hazard of the pursuit makes some demand on nerve and mettle. "The effect of valour," says Montaigne, "is only to be exercised against resistance." But the hare has a name which is the proverbial synonym for timidity—is of all creatures the gentlest, the most inoffensive, and the least capable of showing fight. Of all species of distress, the most appalling is extreme terror. Far worse is it than the most excruciating localized pang, for it possesses and racks the entire being. Happy the man who has not passed through corroborative experiences.

If one wishes to conjure before the mental

vision a living, realized symbol of terror, what image is more likely instantly to present itself than that of the hunted hare? The dazed, frenzied expression of its distended, starting eyes; its painful panting and palpitation; its quiverings, crouchings, and the evident tension of every nerve and muscle—all betoken an agony of terror. And the educators of these boys can regard with moral complacency the tumultuous delight with which they follow the terror-stricken flight of this most helpless and defenceless of creatures; their wild exhilaration as it speeds before their clamorous whoop and halloos and the baying of the hounds, desperation and a premonition of its cruel fate spurring it on, when its strength is well-nigh spent, to renewed frantic exertions; and the climax of their gleeful excitement when at last, utterly exhausted, it drops, to be seized by the hounds, and torn and mangled an appreciable time before it can be killed. We will assume that this is done as speedily as possible. What a glorious achievement! Manliness, forsooth! Does it not rather seem, to the mind that has not been subjected to perverting influences, the most loathsome and disgusting combination possible of cruelty and cowardice—the extreme of despicable, dastardly meanness?

This may discharge one ignobly serviceable function. If, in the years to come, these boys, as military officers, have imposed on them by the policy of their rulers the odious task of massacring a virtually unarmed rabble, under circumstances that resemble sheep-slaughter rather than warfare (patriots will pardon the impossible supposition), they may be the better able to subdue their otherwise invincible repugnance by the useful preparatory training furnished by these quite analogous sports.

Is "manliness" in boys merely a precocious addiction to the vices of men? Does it consist in the unrestrained development of those qualities in which savages excel? Surely the term should specially denote the qualities of the higher type of manhood, among which are conspicuous humaneness, pity, a chivalrous regard for the weak and helpless. We are sure these are most impressively inculcated in the Eton College Chapel, but must not the effect of the verbal teaching be sadly neutralized by the sanctioned practice? Do the boys have pressed home upon them all the implications of the Golden Rule, and of the petition that they shall be forgiven as they forgive, expressing a willingness that the degree of mercy they display shall be the measure of that they receive?

What fitter retribution for merciless sports than, in a future existence, to be the victims of similar treatment? If any consideration could make one acquiesce in such "sport," it would be the knowledge that the hare was the reincarnation of a "sportsman." Medieval eschatologists devolved the torment of the doomed upon demons—beings of pure malignity. They would have been horrified at the notion of its being the amusement of benign beings. But why? If we regard the pain of those inferior to us as a legitimate source of pleasure, why should it detract from the moral excellence of those as much above us in the scale of being as we are above the brute? It is purely a matter of relativity. If, then, heartlessness towards inferiors would bedim the brightness of super-human beings, it would sully our own moral purity.

In attempting an exact delimitation of the rights of animals, we are baffled by the difficulty that inheres in most of our ethical concepts as to precisely where the permissible shades off into the forbidden. Nature endows all her children with a right to a maximum of pleasure and of exemption from pain—at any rate, up to the point of clashing with the paramount interests of mankind. However we may

differ as to the degree of urgency that will warrant us to assert justifying necessity in making animal hardship subserve our welfare, there should certainly be unanimity in the conviction that we do them foul wrong in subjecting them to severe pain out of sheer wantonness—merely for our amusement. To riot in exultant glee over a lowly brother's distress is the supreme blasphemy against the universal parent. That his suffering ministers to our pleasure in itself indicates moral debasement.

Does it not behove Dr. Warre to help to clear Christianity from the allegation that its exaggerated estimate of the chasm yawning between the heirs of immortality and the "beasts that perish" makes it indifferent to animal suffering? With multitudes, hatred of cruelty is such a dominant passion that any creed incurs their bitter antagonism that seems to tend to the toleration of any phase of it. Doubtless Dr. Warre could make out a strong case in rebuttal. But far more telling than the most effective dialectics would be a *practical* demonstration that ecclesiastics are not out-distanced by secularists in their detestation of any form of inhumanity.

The drag-hunt gives just as exhilarating, health-giving an across-country run to boys

and beagles, uninterrupted by vexatious pottering. It may be demurred that this would seem tame to those used to the fiercer delights of the more realistic imitation of the sports of their fathers. But any zest added by an actual living quarry is just the illicit element. Analyze the emotion as we may, we cannot explain away as a contributory component of the pleasure the fact of another's agony. This is present to the consciousness with varying degrees of distinctness. Many will repudiate any recognition of it at all, for no psychic phenomenon is more indubitable than our frequent experience of emotions whose real nature we refuse to admit even to ourselves. If the suffering does *not* enhance our enjoyment, why not eliminate it? If it *does*, a gratification so defiled is stamped, *ipso facto*, as cruel and immoral.

Of course, it is not urged that all participants in the hunt are necessarily dehumanized and degraded thereby. Many undeniably turn out men distinguished for humanity. This is but one of the factors in the formation of their character acting on some of their proclivities. They are, happily, also subject to other moral agencies which tend to develop and foster higher characteristics. It is to be hoped that with most of them the better influences will

prevail. None the less is this particular factor, so far as it is operative, demoralizing and debasing. The immature boy is said to have within him the potentialities of both angel and demon. Many exhibit naturally an unmistakable strain of cruelty, which, if unchecked or reinforced, may become balefully predominant. Their educators should feel a solemn responsibility as to so directing their activities that the baser propensities are curbed and repressed, and the nobler educed and fostered. True, the better sort of boy may join in the pursuit solely for the sake of the brisk movement. To the closing hideous spectacle he shuts his eyes. Still, the effect of hardening his heart against the piteous, heartrending shriek of the torn hare (said by hunters to be so like that of a distressed infant) is to induce callousness. As for the worse sort, we see the brutal gusto with which he enters into it indicated by the coarse crudities of phrase in the *Eton College Chronicle*, which Dr. Warre apologetically deplores. How much of tiger ferocity yet lingers in human nature!

We repeat that so far as it is effective this influence is vicious. We do not deny that, despite it, much kindness of disposition may be hereafter evinced. In pointing out a flaw

it is needless extravagance to insist that the character must be utterly bad. Indeed, the painful incongruity of the failings of an otherwise beautiful character renders them more deplorable than the same faults would be in one generally vicious. There is a peculiar sense of the tragic in the contemplation of a saint's shortcomings. It must not, however, be understood to be admitted that the character can receive these local damages without the least general detriment. We cannot be thus partitioned morally into water-tight compartments. Indeed, by the very pleas urged in extenuation two tendencies are indicated which impair the moral nature in its entire range, and which, to the extent to which they are effective, make for the utter subversion of the basic principles of moral excellence.

(1) We are told that these sports are to be absolved from the imputation of cruelty on the score that the pleasure is not derived from the gloating over agony as something which is intrinsically a source of joy. Now, we will not press the consideration, which has been already glanced at, that it is not possible in every case to acquit even of this malignant and truly devilish trait. We will assume that with the majority it is as represented. Do we thereby get rid of the

taint of cruelty? There is more than enough of this if, in pursuit of mere amusement, we *ignore* the suffering it entails. Of the appalling aggregate of agony in the world, vastly more is due to the fatal facility with which we can practise this obliviousness than to conscious malignancy. The vile sweater who piles up an infamous fortune on the misery of thousands of famished women; the profligate who ruins life after life, and then basely deserts his victim — these do not fiendishly exult over the wretchedness they have wrought; on the contrary, they strive to forget it. And it is just the lamentable ease with which the practised offender is able to banish it from his thoughts that is more inimical to morality than aught else.

(2) Again, we are told the sportsman may be generally humane, that he is exceptionally fond of his horses and dogs. Here another tendency of the kind described is indicated — that of excessive partiality in the bestowal of kindness. The kindness that should flow out to all is unduly concentrated on those who specially enlist his sympathies, in whom he has a proprietary interest, or who stand in special relation to him. That we should bestow on those in our more immediate

sphere an affection of peculiar intensity is both natural and commendable. But if carried to such extreme that it becomes absolutely *exclusive*; if it is merely a phase of an expanded egoism which regards with indifference all outside the circle of which self is the centre, and ruthlessly tramples on their rights and claims; if the pleasure of a favoured one is thus in the least furthered—then it becomes vicious. These individual attachments are good in themselves, but if not counterpoised by universal benignity become a chief source of moral danger. Any morality worthy the name will have as its animating spirit an active goodwill embracing everything living—a horror at any infliction of pain or injury, except under stress of overpowering necessity. Any egoistic limitation to this universal, active benevolence is of the very essence of all infraction of the moral law. If one's heart warms to one's own little self-centred world, but is cold to all without, and regards as a negligible trifle any suffering of theirs which can purchase enjoyment to those within, one's amiable impulses show themselves not to have the ethical true ring. A capability of detaching the judgment from personal biases, of putting ourselves, by imaginative sympathy, in the place of those

affected by our actions, and, above all, of not wantonly ignoring, but considering with the most vivid solicitude, any pain these actions may entail—these are, at least, some of the prime requisites of moral nobility. Can it be denied that these “sports” tend to extinguish them? Is not this their decisive condemnation? They encourage instead that insensate passion for motiveless destruction which has for its fruition the tremendous total of agony implied in the tens of millions of yearly victims of every variety of “sport,” particularly the millions who escape mutilated to die a lingering death. Is it not iniquitous to put the seal of approval upon proclivities that have such an issue?

Whatever answer we make to the question whether civilized mankind is morally advancing or receding, there cannot be a doubt that, in the vitally important particular of humanity, the advance has been continuous. Still, the barbarian within us dies hard. Practices which had their rise in the imperative necessities (for such the hunt then was) of primeval savages have become so inveterate and ingrained in the nervous system that, though the need for them has long ceased, some of the barbarities are still rife, out of wantonness. But slowly is the

barbaric taint being eliminated. Yet each generation should show an appreciable rise above the level of the last. Dr. Warre defends the hare-hunt on the ground that it is no worse than the usages of the boys' fathers. Just as if the legitimacy of all customs that bore the stamp of the paternal approval admitted of no question, but possessed the authority of absolute, immutable law! Had this principle, of the unimprovable perfection of the existing standard, prevailed in the past, we should be still revelling in gladiatorial spectacles and man and tiger conflicts; gentle ladies would still refuse to make the life-saving signal on behalf of those whose demeanour and achievements had not sufficiently won their admiration. Doubtless it was objected, against those who first suggested that these were not edifying sights for children, that to forbid their attendance would be an invidious reflection on the parents.

It is with the aristocracy that this barbarous anachronism of cruel sports, this hateful survival from savagedom, is most persistent. Habit, through countless generations, has blunted the moral feelings to their real atrocity. But we are convinced that, despite the coercive influence exerted by social environ-

ment, men of Dr. Warre's intellectual and moral calibre will be able to free themselves from this class bias. They cannot deem that we have already reached the *ne plus ultra* of moral progress. They must see that, in respect of a wider humanity and the growth of a tender considerateness for all beings capable of feeling pain, there is scope for immense advance before anything like a true ideal is attained. Should it not be a source of shame to its rulers if Eton lags in the rear of this forward movement? Should it not be their devout wish that this splendid institution, which occupies so supreme a place in the nation's pride as the nursery of its most illustrious statesmen and leaders in every department of the national life, should also take the lead in this advance so vitally essential to its moral welfare? Then with a hundredfold fervour our aspiration will be—
Floreat Etona !

ESSAY II

By BEATRICE E. KIDD

II

THE word "cruelty" is not easily defined, especially when it relates to our treatment of the other commonly called "lower" animals. When the victim is a human being, it does not require much definition. The amount of pain suffered and the innocence and helplessness of the sufferer are the chief factors which decide our judgment of the oppressor. Into his motives we do not inquire too closely. His action has produced a condition of pain and misery, therefore we condemn him. If the attack was unprovoked, and the victim not in a position to retaliate, we condemn him more emphatically. The whole thing is decided from the point of view of the object, with whom we identify ourselves by sympathy.

But our sympathy being, as a rule, bounded by the limitation of race, how is it to be expected that our sense of justice shall transcend it? Almost unconsciously, in deciding

the question of the cruelty of a particular act done to a being of a different species, we identify ourselves with the agent, and consider the matter from *his* point of view. Was he unconscious of the pain he produced? Did he act from a mistaken motive? Did he gain any substantial benefit by his deed? An affirmative answer to any of these questions is commonly held to exonerate him from the charge of cruelty, and this though the object suffer torture, and be both innocent and defenceless! Yet it is impossible to find any convincing reason why we should not employ in our dealings with the subhuman groups the same code of equity as the best of us would employ towards our own species. A different method of treatment will be necessary in the case of savage animals as of savage men; but the only logical attitude towards the problem of cruelty lies in an acceptance of the position adopted by the Humanitarian League in its statement of principles: "That it is iniquitous (*i.e.*, cruel) to inflict avoidable suffering on any sentient being."

Taking, then, this—the humanitarian—definition of cruelty, we need no argument to show that hare-hunting stands condemned. The idea of thus killing the most timid, nervous,

retiring, and unaggressive of animals in self-defence is obviously absurd, and the comparatively small number of hares in our country precludes also the idea of their destruction (by hunting) being "unavoidable." Moreover, the inherent evil in beagling lies, not chiefly in the killing of the hare, but in its torture—the probably unexampled torture of strain, terror, and exhaustion combined—which is made to extend over so long a period that it is a subject for wonder that the animal does not oftener die from sheer sensation.

But even taking the more ordinary definition of cruelty as the *wanton* infliction of suffering, we can find no shadow of excuse for beagling as a form of recreation for schoolboys. Is it to be denied that cruelty is often inherent in the young? And should it not be the aim of all true education to help the immature mind to "move upward, working out the beast"? The whole idea of spiritual and psychical evolution rests on this gradual elimination from the character of the more rude and primitive instincts. It is as foolish to glorify as "human," and therefore admirable, the attributes of the original savage as those of the still remoter beast, from whom the savage sprang, more especially when it is easy to deduce that many

of their attributes were identical. Rather should the newer qualities, the fruits of riper experience, higher aspiration and clearer knowledge, be suffered to supersede the old, which belonged to a former condition and environment. The man of the twentieth century is expected to have a different ideal from the cave-dweller. All the emotions have, in fact, been undergoing a process of refinement through the ages whereby they become transformed, and our poets teach us that every one of them is capable of yet further spiritualization and exaltation.

What, then, is this shameful appeal to the blood-lust in man? It is a disgraceful instinct which ought to have been left behind long ago.

The schoolmaster who realizes his vocation will place himself in the line of the evolutionary forces, and will strive to present new ideals to his pupils instead of clinging to the old. The spectacle of the Headmaster of the foremost school in England excusing himself from the duty of interfering with a cruel sport, because the boys "have enjoyed their liberty in this matter from time immemorial," is indeed pitiable. Dr. Warre, in refusing to substitute the drag-hunt for the hare-hunt at Eton, is evidently less progressive than his predecessors, who consented to the abolition of such pastimes

as the beating to death of a ram (previously ham-strung) in Weston's yard, together with the cat and duck hunts, badger-baits, and dog-fights, which we learn from Maxwell Lyte's history were once "organized for the special edification of the Eton boys." The story of the college hare-hunt seems to show that at Eton it is the boys who are the arbiters on the morality of the sports in which they choose to indulge. Dr. Warre's reluctance to interfere with their liberty seems to argue a fear of them which could not have been felt by the more courageous Headmaster who dared to decree that no more mutilated rams should be beaten to death with his consent.

Meanwhile the R.S.P.C.A. is obviously afraid of Dr. Warre. His action has been officially stated in its journal to be "contrary to the principles of the parent society," yet it allows its Windsor branch annually to elect him on its committee. When the matter is brought before the attention of the Governing Body, that body refers the matter to the Headmaster. The Headmaster refers the matter to the boys, and the boys, in whom the "ape and tiger" is not only not allowed to die, but actually encouraged to live, decide to continue the practice of "breaking up" the wretched, shrinking, pitiable little victims of their unmanliness.

Whatever may be Dr. Warre's qualifications as a scholar, it is obvious that he possesses no superabundant knowledge of the nature of boys. It does not require a poet to discern the unenviable qualities of ape and tiger beneath the chaste surplice of a choir-boy or the gentlemanly fastidiousness of an Eton coat and top-hat. Any of the servants in a household where there are boys can testify to their cruelty, and many of the humanest men can remember the time when to them, too, the sentiment of pity was unknown. Yet Dr. Warre in his innocence is entirely unaware of this side of a boy's character.

"I am quite sure," he says, speaking of the boys who go out with the beagles, perhaps as many as two hundred, "that the boys are not cruel, and that they would not sanction any cruelty." It would be interesting to obtain from the Headmaster of Eton an exact definition of the kind of cruelty he recognises and "detests."

Although we hold that the charge of cruelty can only be decided with a due regard to the object's point of view, it is instructive to inquire also into that of the subject. Blood-sports are frequently defended on the ground that it is not the killing which constitutes the pleasure,

but the accessories—the healthful exercise, the exhilaration and excitement of the run. If this plea were honest, there could be no opposition to the suggestion of substituting the drag-hunt for the hare-worry, since the former has all the pleasurable features of the latter, *minus* only the cruelty. But, unfortunately, there is clear evidence in the case of the Eton boys that it is the actual death of the hare which is regarded as the supreme event. The chase loses more than half its charm if the miserable victim, provider of the day's amusement, chance to escape, or if it fall into the hands of some other executioner. Take, for instance, the following passage from the *Eton College Chronicle* :

“*February 23, 1899.*—Time 1 hour 50 minutes. A very good hunt, especially creditable, since scent was only fair, and we were unlucky to lose this hare, which was beat when she got back to Salt Hill. On the next day we heard that our hare had crawled out of the gate, up the High Street to Burnham, and entered a public-house, so done that it could not stand, and was caught by some boys, who came to tell us half an hour afterwards, but we had just gone home. Too bad luck for words !”

Here is a distinct admission that what is regretted is the loss of the final death scene, when the master of the pack and the excited

hounds struggle for the distinction of extinguishing the last spark of life from the quivering little body, both feeling equally, no doubt, that they have "thoroughly deserved blood."

One more peculiarity in Dr. Warre's defence of his scholars remains to be noticed. He expresses regret that the terms current in sporting papers, such as "breaking up" of hares and "blooding" of hounds, should have found their way into the pages of the *Eton College Chronicle*, "being objectionable in sound and liable to misinterpretation."

Any account of a run with the beagles which omitted such expressions on the ground that they were "objectionable in sound" would certainly be itself "liable to misinterpretation." To call a spade a spade is an offence to Dr. Warre no less than to the prominent vivisector who recently suggested that his work should be described by the more ambiguous title of "animal experimentation." It is, in fact, quite customary for those who defend inhuman practices of every kind to suggest that an unctuous phraseology can cover a multitude of sins. The school journal which chronicles the doings of the hunt may not be suitable reading for young boys; but we would prefer

that it should continue to tell the plain truth, in common with the sporting papers, rather than that the boys should be instructed to omit such passages as might excite criticism on the part of the Humanitarian League. For this would amount to a deliberate repression of that honourable instinct of candour supposed to be characteristic of the British schoolboy. Chivalry, sympathy, true manliness—it is hard to conceive how the Eton boy is to attain these, when allowed to seek his recreation, under the approving and encouraging eye of those in authority over him, in tormenting the pathetic little wild creature whose most conspicuous characteristic is fear.

In twenty years' time these Eton boys of to-day will be filling important positions in our Empire. Then, unless the influence of the old college and its traditions have been superseded by one nobler and worthier, we shall see the fruits of Dr. Warre's training in the conduct of the ruler and the soldier who know no pity; the cleric who clings to an ethical standard of yesterday; the politician who invents fair pseudonyms to cover reprehensible deeds.

But their sons will condemn them; for even in their day a new standard will surely be recognised at Eton, since the spirit of progress

is like the sunlight, which will force its way in through the chinks and crannies of shutters barred and bolted to exclude it. The schoolboy will then no longer repeat to himself the formula, "I must be honourable, brave, chivalrous, but I may be cruel," for he will perceive that in being cruel he has forfeited the very qualities he most admires. Then he will learn (not, perhaps, from his masters, but intuitively, because he will be the child of a more enlightened age) to pity the men and women who have no knowledge that it is immoral to torture for pleasure, and to despise those who, preferring their pleasure above all things, deny the torture they inflict.

ESSAY III

By E. CRICKMAY

III

“There is in every animal’s eyes a dim image and gleam of humanity, a flash of strange light through which their life looks out and up to the great mystery of our command over them, and claims the fellowship of the creature if not of the soul.”—RUSKIN.

IN any discussion as to the undesirability of a sport such as hare-hunting, and its good or bad effects upon the young, the fairest plan seems to be the consultation of the strongest arguments in its favour, and the due consideration of the weight which they really possess.

The mass of English country-folk who indulge in this “pastime” do not, indeed, attempt to defend it; it is part of their traditional life, an excellent custom of great antiquity. They enjoy it, and there is no need to justify so good a sport because it may be objected to by some few sentimentalists who are probably town-bred, and know nothing of the “delights” of a country life. There are, however, those who, being in some position of responsibility towards

large numbers of boys, do realize that there is an ever-increasing body of people who object most strongly to hare-hunting and the kindred sports. Such men endeavour to justify, amongst other things, the practice of keeping school packs of beagles on the grounds that the sport develops the manly virtues of pluck and endurance, and is necessary for the physical development of the boys; it encourages them in that love of open-air life and exercise which has been held to make the Englishman the fine creature that he is.

After reading nearly everything that has been written in the defence of the chasing of hares, we quote the following passage, which seems most aptly to illustrate the tone of mind of those who believe that this sport is a desirable part of the national life :

“The common brown hare has long been associated with the happiest traditions of English sport. Its presence in the countryside has served to draw all classes of society together, and contributed in no small degree to the maintenance of mutual sympathies.”

It is, of course, a noble function for any living creature, however humble, to be the means of bringing happiness and social reunion to generations of beings infinitely higher in the scale than itself, even though that function be

exercised only through misery and death; but now that we are presumably attaining some measure of civilization, can we not arrange matters rather better and manage to obtain our social pleasures without the continual sacrifice of a wild and joyous animal like the hare?

It is a rather sad revelation of the shallowness of much of our so-called refinement and progress that large classes of the community still associate the idea of *pleasure* with the chasing and killing of a shy and timid creature, and that they try to repudiate the accusations of barbarism and cruelty by pointing out the highly social function of sport and its "beneficial effect upon the young." We read in a well-known book of the "Fur and Feather" series that "one great point in favour of hare-hunting is that it brings up the young in the way it should go"; and, further, that "a period of perfectly ecstatic delight is obtained by a day with the harriers."

Have we fallen to such a low level that we find it impossible to get some measure of physical development, and a fair amount of friendly companionship, without resorting to the harrying and worrying to death of some wild animal? Is it not absurd to assert that this chasing and hunting is in any real sense

a beneficial or educative act? That it gives pleasure is possible, but that it is a more beneficial emotion than drunkenness and gambling is exceedingly doubtful. Just as the human embryo passes rapidly through the lower evolutionary stages, so probably each one of us runs more or less quickly along that road of human progress, every milestone of which marks an advance in the endowment of the race. We must not unduly hasten the individual pace, but we certainly should not arrest it; and we hold that this is exactly the result of the fostering and encouraging of such sports as the hunting of the hare.

We see the boy, a robust barbarian, selfish, and consequently insensitive to the rights of others, cruel, as unimaginative people are apt to be. Instead of developing the other side of his nature, and endeavouring to rouse the latent feelings of mercy and pity and of helping to increase his will-power and self-control, we deliberately allow him to indulge in a form of excitement which accentuates the very faults he already possesses in excess.

Modern psychology is greatly occupied with the question of "attention," and now the best educators are realizing that the objects and emotions to which a child's "attention" is

directed are infinitely more powerful in their influence than any mere "book learning," and that their chief aim must be to widen the field both of observation and of feeling, so as to produce a really well-developed "all-round" human being. It is one of the weaknesses of sport that it narrows the field of "attention"; the excitement and pleasure of the chase are realized, but the sufferings of the hunted animal are ignored; indeed, it is thought unmanly and sentimental to consider for one moment the misery of the hare who, after a long race for its life, is killed when dead beat. Stiff with nervous and muscular exhaustion, it cannot even crawl away from its pursuers.

The "attention" of the boys is directed to their own "delight," and any sympathy with, or admiration of, the wild life they are destroying is rendered impossible. The desire to kill, that relic of barbarism, is in the young heart; it is encouraged, and any notions of fair play or protection of the weak are excluded from their mental and moral vision. Ruskin once defined "vulgarity" as "insensibility," and in this sense hare-hunting is certainly vulgar, because it fosters that insensibility to suffering which, curiously enough, is so often confounded with the idea of manliness.

A noticeable feature of this age has been the gradual dawn of humanitarianism as opposed to mere sentimentalism. This is encouraged by the works of men like Ernest Seton-Thompson and W. J. Long, who, from being ardent sportsmen, have become equally ardent students of the beauty and wonder of the wild life they formerly destroyed. Some chance event directed their "attention" to its infinite variety and to its kinship with their own form of existence. The great vision of the unity of all life passed before them, and guns and traps became not only abhorrent but impossible. The degenerative instinct of slaying gave place to the higher and nobler desire to observe and to know, and the fruits of observation and of knowledge were the feelings of wonder, awe, and love.

We all probably desire that the children of our nation shall be the finest specimens of their kind; the question is, of course, how this may best be obtained. We are surely not so devoid of invention and of imagination as to be unable to give our boys the fullest measure of physical exercise and of wholesome pleasure without the torture and death of "poor puss." The sport of one generation is frequently the barbarism of the next, and all the arguments used in favour of hare-hunting have been employed in the

defence of bull and bear baiting, cat and duck hunting, cock-fighting, and other similar "amusements," now considered quite "un-gentlemanly."

The cruelty of chasing hares is denied. We have been assured by fox-hunters that Reynard quite enjoys the "run," but we do not remember that anyone has dared to put in this plea on behalf of the hare. If we consult that scientific and unemotional book the dictionary we find the word "cruel" is defined as "unfeeling," "hard-hearted," "disposed to give pain." Does the hunter realize the pain and exhaustion and the misery of the animal he is chasing? He notes these things, because they are continually referred to in the accounts of his "runs," and can be seen in such school papers as the *Eton College Chronicle*. If he observes them, and yet is insensitive to them, is it not the excitement of the sport that makes him "hard-hearted" and "disposed to give pain"? If not consciously cruel, he is unconsciously so, and we can only wonder what has produced this unconsciousness. One of our best modern philosophers has reminded us that there is such a thing as "viciously acquired ignorance," and for centuries we have known the difference between being "consciously

ignorant" and "ignorantly unconscious." We know quite well that we are not compelled to develop manliness, courage, and a love of physical exercise in our boys by a thoughtless and cruel sport. We have already healthy barbarians; we desire surely to produce civilized men, and it seems an absurd confession of weakness or of laziness to encourage the practice of keeping beagles for hare-hunting in schools on the ground that they are a beneficial part of the education of the "sons of gentlemen," as if there were no other alternative. Why do we leave undeveloped those powers of observation and eager interest in nature so noticeable in very young children? Our ordinary education seems to stunt these faculties, so that the average boy too often becomes an uninteresting being with the narrowest range of ideas.

We are beginning to recall the fact that the world of nature is the true setting of man; by our bad methods of education we have alienated and divorced the one from the other, creating a false and unnatural relationship. Children look upon the wild creatures as created solely for their use and abuse (a tone of mind reminiscent of the days when man thought himself and his world the centre of all creation). We are some-

times told that a love by the hunter of the hunted is possible ; as well could we believe in the affection of the Turk for the Armenian whom he tortures and kills. When we read in school magazines such records as the following :

“*February 11, 1899.*—Time 1 hour 20 minutes. Very fast. . . . Here the field spread out to try and pick her up, and she was seen dead beat. . . . Though stiff, she went away very strong, and, running past Dorney Vicarage, she pointed towards Mr. Barron’s farm ; but doubling back again through the Vicarage garden, crossing the road, she was pulled down in a ditch. . . . So we broke her up, and returned home to kennels after a very good hunt”—

we can only feel that all talk of a “love of animals” is mere nonsense, and that the assertions of a headmaster that the boys are “not cruel” shows that he is using the word in a very different sense from that understood by the ordinary practical person. Consciously cruel they may not be, but the reason is that they have been encouraged to suppress the instincts of pity and compassion.

Hanging for theft, flogging of women, bear-baiting, and similar practices were not considered to be cruel in bygone days ; indeed, they were regarded as necessary, some for the maintenance of social order, and others for the

recreation of the people. To-day, however, the statement, "What was good enough for my father satisfies me," is of little value; we are not so certain of the benefits of the "good old times." Fresh knowledge of every kind has thrown a different light upon many problems, and we have to reconsider and decide many questions anew for ourselves. Mental laziness and moral cowardice are always arresting this tendency, but all those who desire to be real human beings, and not mere echoes of their environment, find it impossible to drift with the stream. They are forced to think out things for themselves, and increased knowledge of physiology and psychology teaches us the evil influence of many old customs regarded as harmless or beneficial by our forefathers. Just as in the body we find inconvenient and useless organs, like the vermiform appendix, relics of a day when life existed under very different conditions, so in the social organism we can see their mental and spiritual counterparts causing infinite harm both to the individual and to the race.

We all realize more or less that our evolution upwards has at any rate coincided with the breeding out of the slaying and predatory instincts, really civilized life being possible only

when they were subdued. We are beginning to understand that children are not blank pages upon which we can engrave what we desire, but that they are unique individualities seething with instincts good and bad, social and anti-social. We can, to a large extent, direct their energies and guide them along beneficial, not destructive, channels; and we are tardily recognising that the living forces of the child can manifest themselves in barbarous and savage ways, or can be transmuted into powers acting along a higher plane. If we foster the desire to rob and to kill, to lust for blood, we are prolonging the life of immoral and anti-social instincts, and by arresting the moral growth of the unit we are really damaging that of the race.

The supporters of sport seem to imagine that we can give children one standard of morals and conduct towards one division of nature and an entirely different one to that which constitutes their own race. The result has been the production of great mental and moral confusion in the young minds, and the insensibility produced by the encouragement to kill hares and rabbits, etc., has often reflected itself in their dealings with each other in their youth and with their fellows in after-life. The

political economy of the last century was founded largely, if unconsciously, on the morals of the racecourse and of the sportsman.

It may be asked, If you propose to abolish such sports as hare-hunting, what substitute have you, especially for schools where such practices are encouraged in the "physical" interests of the boys? It might seem that with cricket, football, tennis, hockey, golf, fencing, swimming, boating, and gymnastics the bodily development and the encouragement of manliness in English boys could be efficiently carried on. They are all "sports" in the original meaning of that much-abused word, "games," "diversions," "causes for mirth"; but if still more be required, what can be better than the drag-hunt, which harmless form of sport has been supported for years by officers of the Guards, and may therefore be considered sufficiently manly even for schoolboys?

The writer has been present many times at the hound trails held in various places in Westmorland, and has always been impressed with the possibilities of the good "sport" to be obtained by following a pack of eager, panting dogs over hill and dale. The pace of these trails is, of course, too rapid for humans, as the dogs are not loosed until the return of the

“dragman,” but it is a mere matter of arrangement; smaller dogs can be used, and the pace made slower. A good drag-layer twists and turns and doubles, cooling the scent and increasing the difficulty of the course. Heart and lungs are taxed, and pluck and endurance are required for a series of good drag-hunts; no one is hurt, and everyone is benefited. If it be said that such a sport lacks the emotion and excitement of chasing a terrified creature flying for its life, we can only reply that in that admission lies the strongest indictment of the practice. That we should deliberately prefer to give pain and to cause death for our pleasure when there is a painless and inoffensive alternative seems to be a confession of wanton cruelty.

The chief defence of this sport is its antiquity, and that is an argument which to-day has but little weight. Our horizons are wider than those of our forefathers, and with a wider outlook has come a larger sense of our responsibilities to all living things. We recognise that there is a science of life, and that it is for the benefit of the individual and of the race that we should study the laws of this science, and shape our lives thereby. We have learnt that there is no artificial division between man and

the lower creation, but that we are all alike "groaning and travailing together, working out our redemption."

We now believe that each one of us "is not only an end in himself, but at the same time an instrument and a means to the creation of a higher and happier type"; for this reason we are anxious to abolish everything which tends to thwart or to arrest this "creation." We wish to increase the sum of happiness, and to develop those higher emotions, those better impulses which hasten the coming of a truer and better social state. All sport which means the deliberate chasing and killing of any living creature for pleasure seems to be degrading and unmanly in its effects, and we hope the day is not far distant when the good sense and humane feeling of the nation will condemn it.

"Detested sport,
That owes its pleasures to another's pain,
That feeds upon the sobs and dying shrieks
Of harmless nature."

AIMS AND OBJECTS

OF THE

HUMANITARIAN LEAGUE.

THE Humanitarian League has been established to enforce the principle that *it is iniquitous to inflict avoidable suffering on any sentient being*. This principle the League will apply and emphasise in those cases where it appears to be most flagrantly overlooked, and will protest not only against the cruelties inflicted by men on men in the name of law, authority, and conventional usage, but also, in accordance with the same sentiment of humanity, against the wanton ill-treatment of the lower animals.

Among the reforms advocated by the Humanitarian League the following are prominent :

A thorough revision and more humane administration of the Criminal Law and Prison System, with a view to the institution of a Court of Criminal Appeal, the discontinuance of the death penalty and corporal punishment, and an acceptance of the principle of reclamation instead of revenge in the treatment of offenders.

The humanising of the Poor Law, and the prohibition of the industrial use of substances that endanger the health of the workers.

The establishment of public hospitals under municipal control, where experimentation on patients shall be impossible. The complete abandonment of the medical tyranny which would enforce vaccination by fines or imprisonment.

The extension of the principle of International Arbitration, and the gradual reduction of armaments.

A more considerate treatment of subject races in our colonies.

A more vigorous application of the existing laws for the prevention of cruelty to animals, and an extension of these laws for the protection of wild animals as well as domestic.

Prohibition of the torture of animals by Vivisection in the alleged interests of science.

Insistence on the immorality of all so-called "sports" which seek amusement in the death or suffering of animals. Legislative action in the case of the most degraded of such sports.

The prevention, by the encouragement of a humaner diet, of the sufferings to which animals are subjected in Cattle-ships and Slaughter-houses; and, as an initial measure, the substitution of well-inspected public abattoirs for the present system of private butchery.

An exposure of the many cruelties inflicted, at the dictates of Fashion, in the fur and feather trade.

Recognition of the urgent need of humaner education, to impress on the young the duty of thoughtfulness and fellow feeling for all sentient beings.

In brief, the distinctive purpose of the Humanitarian League is to consolidate and give consistent expression to the principle of humaneness, and to show that humanitarianism is not merely a kindly sentiment, a product of the heart rather than of the brain, but an essential portion of any intelligible system of ethics or social science.

Communications to be addressed to the Hon. Secretary,
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